

TIME TRAVELLER'S DIARY: A Skate in the Park

By Michelle Johnson

Of course, the perfect skating rinks found in arenas are nice, especially once the Zamboni comes along to freshen up the ice, but there is nothing quite like an outdoor rink.

Whether you are lacing up to go skate on a pond, lake, or in a park, there is something quite charming, and nostalgic, about skating on an open-air rink.

Assuming the weather cooperates, the north section of Aurora's Town Park transforms into a skating rink during the winter months. You might be surprised to learn that this is actually the oldest, continuously operating, skating surface in Town.

Sure, it only appears during the deep freeze of our Canadian winter, and some seasons it doesn't come to fruition, but did you know that when you skate across the park's frozen surface you're taking part in a tradition that extends back over 120 years?

Our records indicate that 1896 was the first year that a rink was constructed in Town Park and it was the work of the Mosley brothers.

Later that winter, the rink hosted a masquerade ice carnival, or a 'fancy skate', that featured music from the Battalion Band. Prizes for the ladies best fancy dress, gentlemen's best fancy costume, and overall best comical dress were awarded.

Miss Lulu Lepper recieved a gold langtry pin for best ladies costume, Kenneth Campbell won a gold mounted Albert chain for gentlemen's best costume and Miss Vic Querrie won a pair of gold sleeve buttons for most comical costume. Unfortunately, there are no pictures but one can imagine Victorian-era men and women wearing their most fancy and comical clothes while skating under the stars.

The construction and management of the rink was open to anyone in Town ? all they had to do was apply to Council and receive permission. Throughout the years the rink had a number of ice masters, including the Aurora Skating and Hockey Club and residents Fred Browning and Dan Cameron.

It was their duty to publish a schedule in the local paper so eager skaters could plan their ice time. If you were looking to skate during the 1910/11 season, then you ought to know:

'The ice rink in Town Park was opened last week and is being well patronized by the young people. The ice has been in good condition owing to the continued cold weather. It is open for skating every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings and Tuesday and Friday evenings for hockey practice. Wednesday afternoon is reserved for lady skaters. The Citizen's Band will be in attendance every Thursday evening' (The Aurora Banner, December 23, 1910).

Perhaps if the weather holds up you can soon take a time travelling skate on the old Town Park ice rink.